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NJEA President
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Good afternoon. My name is Marie Blistan. I am a teacher of students with special needs in Washington Township (Gloucester), and the president of New Jersey Education Association.

As you know, we worked with the DOE to design, host and facilitate four community meetings with educators, parents, caregivers, students, and other interested stakeholders, as well as two additional meetings with high school students who have taken the PARCC test. Representatives from stakeholder organizations worked together to analyze and process all data from these meetings and contributed to the final report.

One of the teachers who participated said, “My job has always been to inform, instruct, and assess.” I’d like you to focus on that last word.

Assessment is a critical element of teaching and learning in every single classroom. As teachers, we tailor our lessons to meet the needs of the students in our classrooms. We assess students throughout each lesson – we ask questions, we use in-class writing assignments, we write our own tests – and we use the information we gather from these assessments to inform our instruction moving forward. Standardized tests are not without value, but the value a standardized test has for a classroom teacher like myself pertains to the overall “health” of an entire educational system. Unfortunately, unlike most standardized tests, PARCC fails to do even this. PARCC is so disconnected from the realities of the classroom and the multitude of factors that contribute to student growth, that it simply cannot gauge any progress made within a single classroom across a given academic school year.

Parents, students, and teachers all acknowledge that the PARCC results come too late. We appreciate the Department of Education reducing the time superintendents have to report their assessment results to their boards of education, students, parents, and teachers. We would like to see this time reduce even more, so that the results can be of more relevant use.

Furthermore, PARCC is the wrong type of assessment because it negatively affects many elements of education. Take, for example, curriculum. Curriculum is deeply constrained and challenged by testing time, the expectation for educators to teach to the test, and emphasizing skills that are not related to respective content areas. Due to the excessive hours of testing and the test preparation leading up to PARCC, teaching and learning has been greatly constrained. Many educators and students expressed the “frantic pace” of the year and the pressure to pack 10 months of curricular materials into 8 months, costing educators and students’ creativity, autonomy, and student engagement. The current time spent on testing across grades 3-11 is 5,175 minutes. This equates to over 3 years of a once-per-week, 45-minute elective or “specials” period, where kids could be introduced to vocations, trades, the arts, etc. PARCC has become a massive intrusion on the school year, robbing students of valuable learning time and leaving teachers struggling to find time to do the real teaching they know their students need. Statewide assessments should enrich curricula not burden students and teachers.

I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude the Department, as they have taken the report that was presented by NJEA involving the concerns of many stakeholder organizations, including students and parents, and have earnestly made efforts to fix this assessment. I commend them for that,

and we must do what we can to make sure those modifications are passed into regulation. However, we are not done. We have only reached the tip of the iceberg in terms of creating an authentic assessment that will ensure our students achieve success. We look forward to continuing our work on transitioning away from PARCC's use as a statewide assessment.

It is our hope that the Department will honestly and openly explore a longer-term and intentional transition to the Innovative Assessment Pilot under *Every Student Succeeds Act*. The Innovative Assessment Pilot provides opportunities for assessment to be classroom-based, curriculum-embedded, and grounded in authentic performance. Participation in this pilot would provide New Jersey educators the chance to further deepen their assessment literacy -- including how to effectively design, objectively score, and expertly use data from performance assessments to inform instructional practice -- and make an even more meaningful impact on all students.

Thank you.